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A Typical 24-Hour Period In The Spiritual Life Of Americans

PRINCETON, N.J., A new survey conducted for the Christian Broadcasting Network by The Gallup Organization represents the first attempt to examine, in detail, the religious thoughts and activities of the American people during a typical 24-hour period and to determine how these thoughts and activities relate to their outlook and relationship to other people.

The survey sought to gain insight into such basic questions as: Is faith really alive in the homes of America? Are there signs of "easy believism" in our religious lifestyles? Are people ignoring the costs and obligations of discipleship? Is faith having a transforming effect upon the lives of Americans, or is it merely a "feel good" kind of faith?

On one level the findings on the religiousness, or religiosity, of the American people are impressive. Most say religion is either very or fairly important in their lives. Three in four believe God has a plan for their lives. Two-thirds say they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

MANY ARE INVOLVED IN RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

In addition, two-thirds of persons in the survey say they have been involved in one or more of 15 religious activities during the 24-hour period tested. And the proportion is even somewhat higher when one takes into consideration those activities that are spiritual in nature but do not relate to religion in the formal sense.

Furthermore, many say they thought about God during this 24-hour period, while many others talked about God or some aspect of their faith, prayed alone or with others.

The appeal of religion is broad based, with high levels of religious activity recorded for each age and education group.

Thus, in one way or another, the large majority of Americans are involved in religious activities.

A SELF–CENTERED KIND OF FAITH?

But as we examine the findings closer, we see evidence of a self-centered kind of faith. The effect of reading the Bible, prayer and meditation, and religious radio and television shows is much more often stated in terms of "it makes me feel good" than in terms of making one realize the need for repentance or the need to do God's will regardless of the cost.

Paralleling these findings are those that reveal that very few people pray for forgiveness.

Furthermore, the survey responses suggest that the religiously-motivated behavior cited in the survey is more often in the nature of a passive, "live-and-let-live" kind of philosophy than in the nature of selfless and heroic action on behalf of others.

YET MOST WANT FAITH TO GROW

While these findings are unsettling and suggest the need for churches to continue to stress the obligations of faith as well as the rewards, it is encouraging to note that most Americans humbly admit that they do not come close to following the teachings of Jesus Christ, and, at the same time, earnestly want their faith to grow.

It would appear, therefore, that many in the nation would be open to stronger messages of the need to repent and the need to live a more sacrificial life. Such messages, however, should not crowd out the message of hope, particularly in this troubled time in history.

STEPS CHURCHES COULD TAKE

The faith lives of Americans might also be deepened by providing further instruction in the area of personal devotion, for the survey clearly shows the need for helping people bring the Bible into their daily lives, helping them with prayer and meditation techniques, and helping people live out God's plan for them – at home, at their jobs, and in their avocations.

There is great need for practical help of this sort, because relatively few read the Bible, and those people who do spend little time reading it and sometimes can not recall what they read. Surveys show a low level of Biblical knowledge in this country – clear evidence that many read the Bible in a desultory manner.

(continued)

68% HAVE ENGAGED IN ACTIVITIES TESTED

In a typical 24-hour period, two-thirds (68%) of the American people engaged in one or more of the 15 wide-ranging religious or spiritual activities tested in the survey.

Roughly equal proportions of Protestants (73%) and Catholics (67%) said they have engaged in one or more of these activities.

Among those who say religion is "very important" in their lives, 85% engaged in one or more activities, while the comparable percentages are 88% for the "highly spiritually committed" group, 80% for the "intense searchers," 79% for those who believe "God has a plan for our lives," and 83% for those who have "made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior."

The question and national findings:

RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES IN 24-HOUR PERIOD

The purpose of the following question is to trace, as accurately as possible, a 24-hour period in the religious and spiritual life of Americans.

First of all, please think back a full 24 hours from the time of this interview. Let's see, that would be _____ yesterday.

Now, please think about what you were doing at that time, and tell me which, if any, of the items on this card you may have done between that time and the time of this interview – that is, during the last 24 hours.

PARTICIPATION IN 15 ACTIVITIES

Thought about God or some other aspect of my faith	43%
Prayed alone (either silently or aloud)	43
Tried to show evidence of my faith in my speech or actions	24
Talked to someone about God or some other aspect of my faith	20
Meditated	17
Read the Bible	14
Prayed with others (either silently or aloud)	12
Read religious books or devotional literature other than the Bible	11
Listened to a religious program on the radio	8
Attended religious services	7
Shared my faith with others; tried to encourage them to accept my religious beliefs	7
Viewed a religious program on TV	6
Participated in religious activities such as Bible study, prayer fellowship, choir, etc.	6
Participated in volunteer activities, motivated by religious convictions	4
Spoke out on a national issue out of religious convictions	4
Other responses	4
None/no answer	32
	262%*

*Total adds to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

The survey is based on in-person interviews with 1,610 adults, 18 and older, conducted during February.

Giving To Religion

Americans contributed a record $31.03 billion to their churches, synagogues and other religious causes, institutions and agencies in 1983 – more than three times the total contributed to any other segment of the philanthropic community.

The American Association of Fund-Raising Counsel said the estimated contributions to religion represented a 10.5% rise from the $28.06 billion given in 1982 and were more than double the amount religious organizations had received as little as eight years ago.

As a portion of all philanthropy in the United States, giving to religion accounts for 47.7%. In 1982 donations to religion represented 46.5% of all giving.

GIVING TO RELIGION

	Amount (Billions)
1983	$31.03
1982	28.06
1981	24.85
1980	22.15
1979	20.14
1978	18.45
1977	16.93
1976	14.22
1975	12.91
1974	11.94
1973	10.52
1972	10.02
1971	9.98
1970	9.30

(From Giving U.S.A. 1984 annual report – *a compilation of facts and trends on American philanthropy for the year 1983, a publication of the American Association of Fund-Raising Counsel, Inc.)*

43% Of Teens Attend Religion Classes; 7% Want Religion Career

About four in 10 teenagers (43%) say they now are attending classes or study groups concerned with religion. A 51% majority of younger teens, 13 through 15, are studying religion, but among those who are 16 through 18 religious study drops off to 36%.

As might be expected, teens who say they attend church regularly more often report they are studying religion in addition to attending worship services. Religious study is reported by nearly two in three of the regular church attenders (64%), joined by 17% of those who say they are not regular church attenders. No difference is noted according to denomination, with both Protestants and Catholics reporting equal participation in religious instruction.

7% INTERESTED IN RELIGIOUS CAREER

Less than one in 10 (7%) of the teens interviewed by The Gallup Youth Survey say they have ever given a career in religion a great deal of thought. An additional 11% allow that they have given the matter some thought, but 80% state they have given very little or no thought at all to a career in religion.

Church attendance, religious affiliation, and most demographic traits appear to exert little if any influence upon determining which teens will give serious consideration to a religious career. At best, regular church attenders are slightly more likely to say they have given the matter "some" thought, but they are no more likely than non-regular attenders to say they have thought "a great deal" about a religious calling.

BLACKS SHOW HIGH INTEREST

Black teens, however, show very high interest in both a religious career and religious instruction. One in five (21%) of the black youths interviewed says he or she has given a religious career a great deal of thought, and only 36% say they have paid no attention to the possibility at all. By comparison only one in 20 of white youths (5%) is seriously considering a religious career, and 50% say the thought has never entered their minds.

Above-average students are more likely than those whose academic work is average or below average to say they are now receiving religious instruction, but no difference is found between the groups in terms of their sense of religious vocation.

Similarly, young women are slightly more likely than young men to report they are receiving religious instruction, by a margin of 46% to 40%, but no difference is observed between the sexes on the matter of religious vocation.

The question and results (with "no opinion" category omitted):

Are you now receiving any religious training by attending classes or study groups at a church, synagogue, or similar place?

How much thought, if any, have you ever given to making religion your career – a great deal, only some, very little, or none at all?

NOW RECEIVING RELIGIOUS TRAINING

	Yes	No
	%	%
National	43	57
Boys	40	60
Girls	46	54
Ages 13 to 15	51	49
Ages 16 to 18	36	64
Whites	42	58
Blacks	51	49
Above average students	47	53
Average or below	39	61
Protestants	41	59
Catholics	42	58
Attend church regularly	64	36
Do not attend regularly	17	83

THOUGHT GIVEN TO RELIGION AS VOCATION

	Great Deal	Only Some	Very Little	None
	%	%	%	%
National	7	11	32	48
Boys	8	12	35	43
Girls	6	10	29	53
Ages 13 to 15	8	12	39	39
Ages 16 to 18	6	11	25	56
Whites	5	11	32	50
Blacks	21	9	32	36
Above average	7	12	33	47
Average or below	6	11	30	49
Protestants	8	12	32	48
Catholics	6	12	34	46
Regular attenders	7	16	36	38
Not regular	6	6	26	59

The results reported above are based on telephone interviews with a representative national cross-section of 502 teenagers, 13 through 18, conducted from January through March 1984.

Focus On 'Mission England'

About two-thirds (64%) of 458 people interviewed in the Bristol area by the British Gallup Poll think that Evangelist Billy Graham has something relevant to say to people in Great Britain today. Asked further whether they thought Billy Graham had something relevant to say to *them personally*, 43% of the respondents interviewed believed he had. Surprisingly, men were more responsive (47%) than women (39%).

The Poll was carried out May 5th – 8th among people of all religious denominations who had been to church over the last year (just under half the population) prior to *MISSION ENGLAND* which began in Bristol on May 12th.

FOURTH SAY 'VERY LIKELY' WILL ATTEND

Asked specifically about their likelihood of attending the Mission in Bristol, 24% of all churchgoers interviewed claimed it was "very likely" that they would attend, and another 9% claimed it was "quite likely." In total, the survey showed that one in three (33%) of all churchgoers in the last year in the Bristol area claimed that they were likely to attend the mission.

MORE THAN HALF OF BAPTISTS WILL ATTEND

Among the various denominations more than half the Baptists and Methodists interviewed claimed that they would attend the Mission.

Respondents were asked what were the main issues they expected Billy Graham to talk about, and the following replies were recorded:

WHAT WILL GRAHAM TALK ABOUT?

	All Respondents %	Those likely to attend %
God	47	42
Jesus Christ	32	40
The Bible	19	22
The Church	18	20
Social Issues/Community Spirit	16	24
Life After Death/Hope/Salvation	13	20
Nuclear War/Peace	10	11
Morality	9	11
Sin	10	11
Conversion/Revival	6	8
Politics	3	2

When Gallup asked what topics they themselves would *like* Billy Graham to talk about, the following responses were made:

	All Respondents %	Those likely to attend %
World Peace	18	18
God	16	22
Coping with Today's Problems	16	20
Jesus Christ	15	27
Personal Beliefs	12	21
Morality	9	10
Social Issues/Community Spirit	8	8
The Bible	7	12
Family	7	7
Adolescence/Youth	6	9

UNEMPLOYMENT SEEN AS DOMINANT ISSUE

Asked what they thought were the main problems facing people in the Bristol area, unemployment (44%) was regarded as the dominant issue, followed by law and order (13%), the cost of living (12%) and housing (12%).

Questioned further about the main problems they faced personally at the moment, the most important were financial problems (25%), followed by general anxiety and worry (12%), health problems (12%), family tensions (6%), unemployment (5%), loneliness (4%) – particularly with older people – and housing (4%). Nearly half of those interviewed (42%), did not mention any specific problems they personally faced.

Almost all the respondents interviewed in the Bristol area (98%) had heard of Billy Graham and awareness in the Bristol area of the forthcoming Mission was exceptionally high – 93% of all respondents interviewed were aware of MISSION ENGLAND in various cities this summer.

Finally, 38% of all respondents thought that attending a Mission meeting could have a lasting impact on their lives – with the number rising to 63% among respondents who were likely to attend the Mission in Bristol.

INTERESTED IN CONDUCTING A SURVEY IN YOUR CHURCH?

A growing number of priests, ministers, and rabbis have expressed interest in conducting surveys of their congregations and/or local communities.

If you share this interest and would like expert help and advise, we suggest you contact Russell D. Bredholt, Continental Research Associates, 1153 Winged Foot Circle, Winter Springs, Florida 32708. Telephone: (305) 365-4321. Continental Research Associates is affiliated with the Princeton Religion Research Center.

British Favor Women Priests

Almost three in four of the general public approve of the idea of women priests, according to a British Gallup Poll reported in *The Sunday Telegraph*.

On the other hand, those approving are almost equally divided between allowing women to become priests and maintaining church unity.

Gallup first asked people whether they approved or disapproved of allowing women to become priests. The majority, 70%, said they would approve, 16% disapproved, and 14% were undecided. Only among Roman Catholics was there less than majority support for the idea: 37% in favor and 49% against.

Differences between the answers of men and women were small, though more women than men disapproved of the idea. There is a generation gap, however, with a majority (60%) of the over 65s approving.

The main reasons put forward for approving of the idea were:

- Women should be given a chance (33%).
- Women are just as capable as men (29%).
- Equal rights for women (22%).
- Women should not be overlooked because of their sex (16%).

Among those disapproving, one reason dominated the responses: 64% said that priesthood is a man's job, not a woman's.

One argument against allowing women to become priests has been that it might impede Church unity in Great Britain. Those people who approve of the idea, therefore, were asked what they considered to be more important -- women priests or Church unity. This question produced a wide split among those in favor, 31% saying the idea itself was more important and 38% giving more importance to Church unity. The remainder either said that both were equally important (19%) or were undecided (12%).

This Gallup study was conducted between April 11 and 16 among a nationally representative sample of adults in over 95 districts throughout Britain. The results:

Would you approve or disapprove of allowing women to become priests?

Approve	70%
Disapprove	16
Don't know	14

REASONS FOR APPROVING

Why do you say that?
(All approving = 100%)

Should be given a chance	33%
Just as capable as men	29
Equal rights	22
Should not be overlooked because of their sex	16
Mention of the Bible	3
Other	5
Don't know	6

REASONS FOR DISAPPROVING

(All disapproving = 100%)

It's a man's job	65%
Because of own faith	13
Mention of the Bible	11
Doesn't seem right	7
Other	8
Don't know	4

WOMEN PRIESTS OR UNITY?

Having women priests might harm church unity in this country. What do you feel is more important: having women priests or maintaining church unity?
(All approving = 100%)

Women priests	31%
Church unity	38
Both equally	19
Don't know	12

FIVE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD ORDER *RELIGION IN AMERICA, '84*

1. *Religion in America, 1984* is an invaluable source of information on religious beliefs and practices in the U.S. and abroad, much of which is not available elsewhere.

2. It provides national and regional norms against which the clergy can match their own churches or synagogues in terms of religious belief, practice, knowledge and stewardship.

3. It provides new and exciting information that can be developed into sermons or articles on the the state of religion.

4. It provides data indispensable for future planning: What are the new religious interests of church members and non-members? Where does the public think churches are falling short?

5. Specific steps, based on survey data, are suggested as ways to strengthen churches and to improve their outreach.

HOW TO ORDER

Religion in America, 1984 can be ordered from the Gallup Organization, Inc., P.O. Box 310, Princeton, New Jersey 08542 for $25.00.

Public Rates 3 Religious Leaders

Recent Gallup surveys show 88% of the American public giving Pope John Paul II a "favorable" rating, compared to 73% for Dr. Billy Graham and 35% for the Rev. Jerry Falwell.

These ratings are based on the top five positions on a 10-point attitude scale called the Stapel Scalometer, which measures intensity of feeling, both positive and negative.

In "highly favorable" ratings (top two positions on the scale), Pope John Paul II receives a rating of 53%, compared to 32% for Billy Graham and 6% for Jerry Falwell.

GROUPS GIVING HIGHEST RATINGS

The following groups give the Pope significantly higher "highly favorable" ratings than the public as a whole: Catholics (82%), Hispanics (many of whom are Catholics) (59%), and women (57%).

Billy Graham's top marks ("highly favorable" ratings) are given by Protestants (41%), Southern Baptists (53%), persons 50 and older (43%), women (36%) and Republicans (39%).

The Reverend Falwell scores best in terms of "highly favorable" votes with Southern Baptists (13%), persons 50 and older (10%), and Protestants (9%).

Pope John Paul II's "highly favorable" ratings have varied over the nearly five years between 47% and 65%. Graham's have varied between 29% in 1982 and 56% in 1969 (the first measurement was taken in 1963). Only two measurements have been taken of Falwell – 7% in 1981 and 6% in the current survey.

In assessing the relatively low "highly favorable" ratings given Falwell, it should be borne in mind that he is considerable less well-known than the other two religious leaders tested.

HONESTY AND ETHICAL STANDARDS
(Ratings given by teenagers in 1984)

	Very high	High	Average	Low	Very low
	%	%	%	%	%
Medical doctors	22	53	22	3	*
College teachers	15	50	30	3	1
Clergy	26	36	27	9	1
Lawyers	16	42	29	11	1
Congressmen	10	29	40	16	4
Senators	10	28	37	20	4
Business executives	5	28	48	16	2
Journalists	6	25	46	20	2
Union leaders	5	24	47	19	2
Advertising practitioners	3	13	45	32	5

*Less than one percent
**No opinion excluded

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